

At Risk for

LEAD



2018 WELL FED MEANS LESS LEAD CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Analyzing best practices for organizing a coalition
to provide the most effective resources and help
families stay well fed and safe from lead



WELL FED MEANS LESS LEAD

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

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PROJECT STATEMENT

The 2018 *Well Fed Means Less Lead* project statement was to execute a successful lead outreach and educational campaign in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This campaign summary will provide an overview of the project and provide a step-by-step guide to building a replicable model in other communities.

11.6% of
Milwaukee
children tested
for high blood
lead levels.

From December 2016 to September 2018, Hunger Task Force, an anti-hunger public policy organization, initiated, organized and conducted a collaborative campaign of lead awareness, *Well Fed Means Less Lead*. This education campaign focused on residents of the City of Milwaukee at risk for lead exposure. *Well Fed Means Less Lead* provides self-help information on the dangers of lead, how to identify sources of lead and easy steps people can take to protect themselves and their families from lead exposure. It also includes a nutrition component because healthy eating plays an important role in mitigating lead absorption.

No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. The risk for elevated blood lead levels is high in Milwaukee, with 11.6% of children testing at 5µg/dL or more. Additionally, in 2016, 59% of all Wisconsin children with elevated lead test results were from the city of Milwaukee.

>> BEST PRACTICES

- Self-help information is best provided by trusted people who speak your language and look like you and the people you know. This may mean friends, family or trusted professionals. Cultural and linguistic competence are extremely important traits of canvassers. The goal of learning new information and changing behavior is more likely to be obtained when self-help strategies are learned from racial, generational and socio-economic peers.



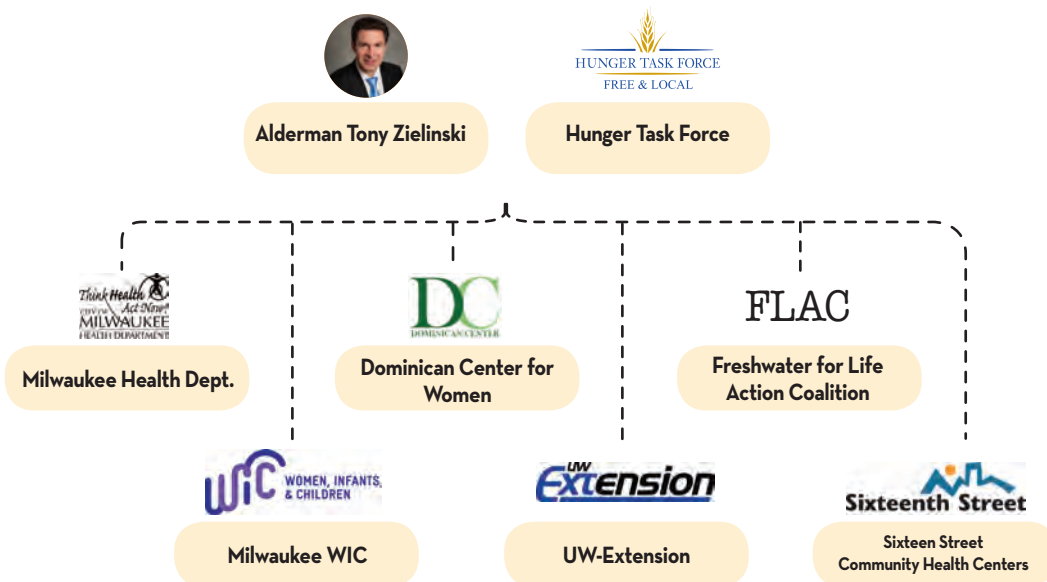
- When taught about lead exposure and given appropriate self-help steps to take, people will take steps to reduce their risks. Providing information about all sources of lead, with consistently positive self-help steps, is effective.



THE MILWAUKEE NUTRITION & LEAD TASK FORCE

On the heels of the lead crisis in Flint, Michigan, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) tapped Hunger Task Force, the USDA's local administrator of food assistance programs, to help organize a coalition of community organizations. The Milwaukee Nutrition & Lead Task Force was formed with a primary goal to create and disseminate culturally-competent, clear and cohesive self-help messages about the dangers of lead exposure, how to identify sources of lead, how to protect people from lead exposure and the important role that nutrition plays in a diet protective of lead.

LEADING MEMBERS OF THE MILWAUKEE NUTRITION & LEAD TASK FORCE



>> IDEAL COMPOSITION OF A LEAD TASK FORCE

- Experienced and tenacious City Alderperson(s)
- Health Department Lead Coordinator
- Determined nonprofit advocacy groups willing to take risks & manage media
- Well-funded and respected hunger relief organizers
- SNAP-ED Funded Extension educators/dietitians
- Environmental advocacy organization
- Pediatrician with lead expertise
- Soil Scientist
- Toxicologist
- Community Foundations
- United Way

Provide a representative from each of the following organizations:

- Women, Infant & Children's Clinic
- Youth service organizations
- Public Schools
- Hospital/Health systems
- Minority Health Coalition
- Independent local media
- Federally Qualified Health Center
- Neighborhood Association



WELL FED MEANS LESS LEAD

The Nutrition & Lead Task Force worked together to develop *Well Fed Means Less Lead*. The campaign includes a series of well-informed and unified messages about lead in paint, water, soil and the environment, as well as messages for women of child bearing age, pregnant women and new mothers. Based on the cohesive messages constructed by all members of the coalition, *Well Fed Means Less Lead* materials were developed to provide self-help strategies people need to identify sources of lead, and actionable steps on what to do and what not to do about lead exposure.



The Well Fed Means Less Lead campaign provided nutrition-related messages:

1. Proper diet plays an important role in lead absorption.
2. Children absorb lead faster on an empty stomach.
3. Calcium, iron and vitamin C are three key nutrients essential to a diet protective of lead.

The *Well Fed Means Less Lead* campaign provided these messages in different formats and several languages to reach a variety of targeted audiences.



Funds to meet the cost of designing and printing *Well Fed Means Less Lead* materials were provided by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education through the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Health.

The goal of the campaign was to create a replicable public health education model that would be scalable in other communities.



There are steps you can take today to protect your family from the risks of lead exposure.



- Participate in free federal nutrition programs, such as WIC, Summer Meals, Farmers Market Vouchers, FoodShare (SNAP) and many others.
- Get your family's lead levels tested.
- Contact your doctor or local WIC Clinic or call your city's Health Department.

Visit GetWellFed.org.

Your nearest lead level testing location is:

WELL FED MEANS LESS LEAD

This initiative is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program that provides food and nutrition assistance to eligible low-income households. It is a federal program that provides food and nutrition assistance to eligible low-income households. It is a federal program that provides food and nutrition assistance to eligible low-income households.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE



One of the first and most important endeavors of the Nutrition & Lead Task Force was the development of consistent messaging that all members would adopt. The group devised clear, cohesive information about 'Lead in Water,' 'Lead in Paint' and 'Lead in Soil' by answering the following questions:

#1 What should you know?

#2 What can you do?

#3 What should you NOT do?

Gathering a diverse group of issue experts was key to developing a unified message that was both accurate and agreed upon by all. Messaging clarity and conciseness was crucial, even when translated into different languages. Below are some of the key messages developed by the Nutrition & Lead Task Force.

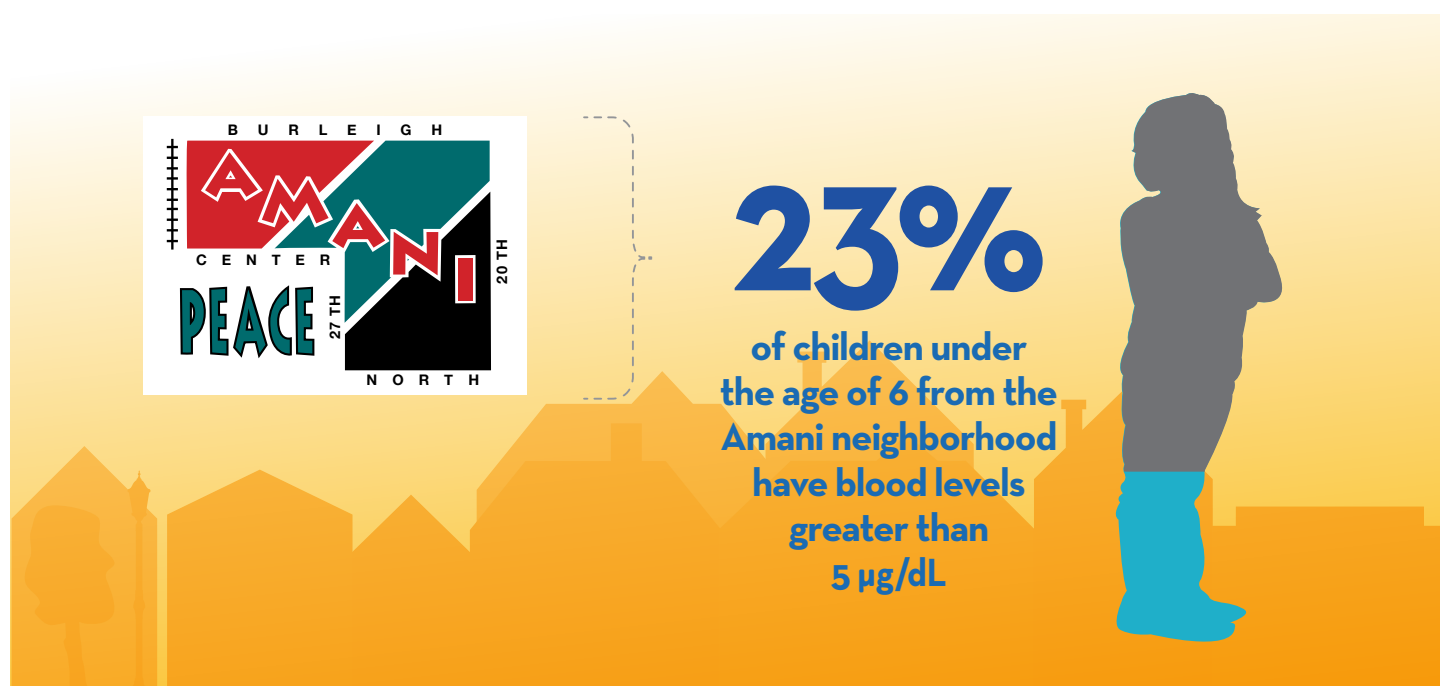
- » Lead is a serious health concern and can be found in paint, water, soil and the environment.
- » Homes built or painted before 1978 contain sources of lead, and people living in them need self-help information to reduce exposure to lead.
- » Lead exposure risks can be avoided by taking practical steps.
- » Children absorb lead 5-10 times faster on an empty stomach.
- » Women of childbearing age and children under 6 should always drink and cook with filtered or bottled water.
- » Infant formula should only be prepared with water from a known lead-free source.
- » Women of child bearing age, children younger than 6 and infants should receive annual lead testing.
- » Eat a healthy, balanced diet that contains good sources of iron, vitamin C and calcium.

Focus topics of paint, water and soil were accompanied by statements that proper nutrition could mitigate the effects of lead exposure, especially in children who are most at risk. That information included the positive message that a diet high in calcium, iron and vitamin C can be protective against lead.



THE AMANI CANVASS: A CASE STUDY

Hunger Task Force partnered with the Dominican Center for Women on a pilot canvassing program in Milwaukee's Amani neighborhood, a geography with a high density of old homes and the highest concentrations of homes with lead service laterals. The majority of these homes had both chipping lead paint and lead pipes.



The Dominican Center for Women is a respected community group that provides education, housing and employment services. Culturally-competent neighborhood residents were hired as short-term organizers to conduct door-to-door canvasses. *Well Fed Means Less Lead* materials were then provided by these canvassers, who knocked on doors and had one-to-one conversations with people.

The campaign targeted approximately 5,200 addresses in the Amani neighborhood, which spans three zip codes with poverty percentages

ranging from 25.6% to 44.6%. Of all children under age 6 tested in this geography, about 23% presented blood lead levels greater than 5 micrograms/deciliter.

Well Fed Means Less Lead also targeted the Amani neighborhood with a comprehensive media campaign to reinforce messaging and bolster new knowledge. The media campaign included targeted mailings, culturally-relevant radio and television advertisements, a robust digital and social media campaign, bus shelter panels and street-level billboards—all intended to saturate the Amani neighborhood.



The door-to-door canvass engaged residents with in-depth conversations about the presence of lead in and around the home, how to identify sources of lead, how to take self-help steps to minimize household lead exposure, and the important role that nutrition plays in a diet protective of lead.

Hunger Task Force utilized a canvassing software program to track conversations, and monitor project progress and canvass activity through metrics. The database held a list of addresses that the Dominican Center used to assign canvassers city blocks for door-to-door education. Canvassers recorded outcomes, completed conversations and surveys each day. The database also allowed canvassers to follow-up and continually update individual profiles with conversation notes.

Canvassing staff were provided uniforms that identified their affiliation with the Milwaukee Nutrition & Lead Task Force, as well as smart phones, tablets and book bags with campaign materials.

Canvassing staff followed two guidelines to ensure consistency and even coverage of the neighborhood:

- (1) When residents were not home or did not answer, canvassers left a custom door-knocker (a flyer that is easily attached to a door knob)
- (2) If a home was vacant, it was marked as such in the campaign database

The canvass was critical for analyzing message reach and effectiveness. Face-to-face conversations with local residents provided real-time feedback on what neighbors knew and which messages proved most useful.

The *Well Fed Means Less Lead* campaign's materials include posters, flyers, brochures, magnets and door hangers containing strong, cohesive messages.



These documents were translated for use with Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations. Throughout the campaign, Nutrition & Lead Task Force group leaders participated in "train the trainer" presentations for local organizations to educate their unique, targeted communities citywide at risk of lead. Four thousand doors were knocked and 50,000 pieces of literature were distributed.

>> Campaign materials are available at no cost and can be downloaded at www.GetWellFed.org

Through this work, one takeaway emerged: the most important and effective component in educating families who could or may be exposed to lead was having a face-to-face conversation with a trusted neighbor, family member or local organization representative about their lead exposure and risks.

**62%
OF RESIDENTS**

would prefer to learn
about lead prevention
through a face-to-face
conversation.



>> LEAD IN MILWAUKEE

In 1962, the City of Milwaukee ended the practice of using lead water service lines to bring drinking water into homes; and in 1978, the use of lead was banned in paint across the United States. Despite these practices, lead remains a problem.



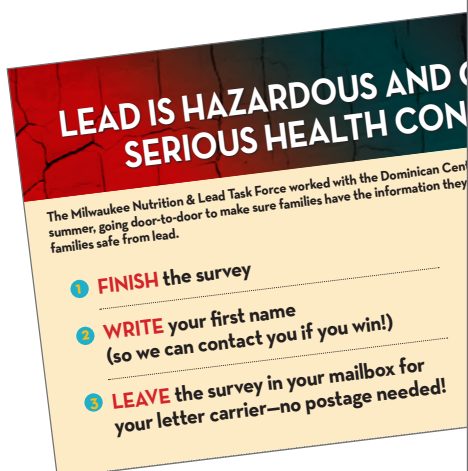
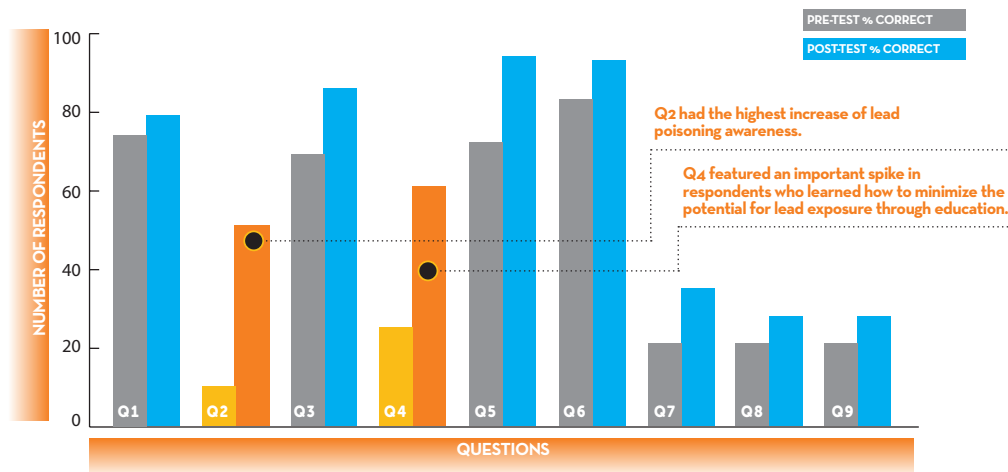
More than 70,000 homes within Milwaukee—a city with areas of concentrated poverty and aging housing—receive their water through lead pipes and laterals. Additionally, many of these same homes have the original lead paint coating porches, door frames, windows and walls. Exterior lead paint can chip away, extending toxicity to the soil.

Additionally, many products shipped from companies overseas also often contain lead. Items such as mini-blinds, cosmetics, cookware or candy that contain lead are sold and distributed throughout the United States and make their way into homes throughout Milwaukee.

CAMPAIGN IMPACT

The original goal of the Amani neighborhood canvass was to knock on 5,850 doors and have 521 conversations with residents about lead. This goal was based on the number of homes identified with lead laterals and Hunger Task Force's historic canvass contact rate. In the end, the team knocked on 4,166 doors, and held 821 conversations. The conversations were more robust than expected, lasting 10-15 minutes on average.

Surveys (pre-test and post-test) were mailed out to all residents living in the Amani neighborhood. The pre-test mailings were timed to hit mailboxes, well before talking with a Dominican Center canvasser. The post-test mailings were then delivered well after talking with a Dominican Center canvasser to properly measure education gained. While the canvassers were not able to reach everyone in the Amani neighborhood, the social media messaging and word-of-mouth components of the *Well Fed Means Less Lead* campaign likely also impacted the positive learning outcomes.



This is a survey to tell us how much you know about lead exposure.

- In 2015, the rate of lead poisoning (tested 5 mcg/dL or above) in Milwaukee County for children under age 6 was:
 - ☐ Equal to the statewide rate
 - ☐ Less than the statewide rate
 - ☐ Twice the statewide rate
- List three symptoms of lead poisoning in children:
 -
 -
 -
- How does having an empty stomach change the rate of lead absorption into the body?
 - ☐ Increases the rate
 - ☐ Decreases the rate
 - ☐ Has no effect on rate of absorption
- List three steps that minimize the potential for lead exposure:
 -
 -
 -
- Are there already federal nutrition programs that will provide healthy, nutritious meals to children for free or at a reduced price?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ I don't know
- What nutrient(s) can help reduce lead absorption?
 - ☐ Iron
 - ☐ Vitamin C
 - ☐ Calcium
 - ☐ All of the above
- Circle four (4) good sources of iron:
 - Peanut Butter
 - Oranges
 - Beans
 - Tomatoes
 - Lean Meat and Poultry
 - Strawberries
 - Iron-fortified Cereals
 - Dairy
- Circle four (4) good sources of vitamin C:
 - Seafood
 - Oranges
 - Peanut Butter
 - Grapefruit
 - Tomatoes
 - Red Bell Peppers
 - Dairy Products
 - Red Meats
- Circle four (4) good sources of calcium:
 - Low-fat/Fat-free Milk
 - Oranges
 - Peanut Butter
 - Yogurt
 - Leafy Green Vegetables (ex: spinach)
 - Calcium-fortified Non-dairy Milk
 - Tomatoes
 - Milk



There was a remarkable increase in respondents who were able to correctly list three symptoms of lead poisoning in children, as well as an increase in respondents who were able to correctly list three steps to minimize the potential for lead exposure over time. Additionally, there was an incredible surge of visitors to the website during the canvassing period.

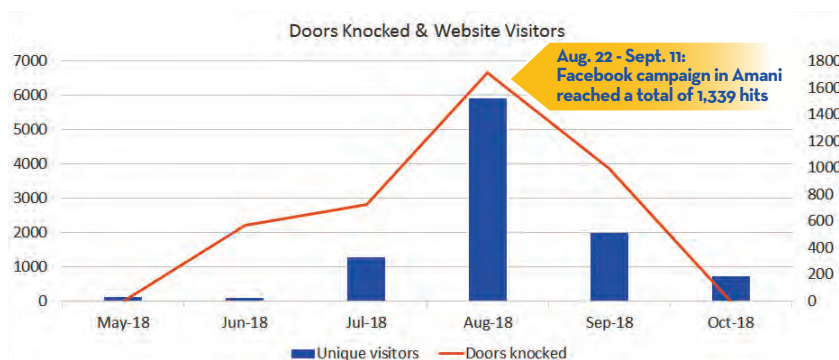
The Amani canvass results support the need for replicating *Well Fed Means Less Lead* as a public health education model.



After receiving education, individuals scored

**38.9%
HIGHER**

on the post-test about lead awareness education.



>> LEAD IN MILWAUKEE'S CHILDREN

Because of its prominence within, around and throughout many Milwaukee homes, rates of lead exposure—especially in children—are staggering. In the City of Milwaukee, children tested for high levels of lead at 11.6%, three times the state rate.



In the Amani neighborhood nearly 1 in every 4 children ages 6 and under tested for high levels of lead.

That rate is five times higher than the rate of Flint, Michigan during the peak of Flint's water crisis. More troubling, nearly 40% of Milwaukee children have not had a lead test, so it is difficult to determine the true extent childhood lead poisoning of Milwaukee.

SUMMARY

Throughout the campaign, the Milwaukee Nutrition & Lead Task Force learned of several important trends and best practices while educating the public about lead exposure in Milwaukee. The combination of culturally-relevant messaging and one-on-one education demonstrated measurable increases in knowledge and understanding within the targeted Amani neighborhood. The survey showed that when taught, people can identify possible sources of lead and ways to protect themselves and their families against exposure. The amount of individuals who were able to identify signs of lead poisoning in children quadrupled.

Municipal, county, state and federal government agencies have continued to work to find a solution to the lead crisis, both locally and nationwide. Because lead is found throughout older homes, it is difficult and costly to remove safely. While the long-term solution for removing lead hazards is being developed, public education campaigns like *Well Fed Means Less Lead* can empower people to reduce and eliminate their lead exposure risks.

The *Well Fed Means Less Lead* campaign included intentionally positive messaging about how individuals and families can learn about lead (What should you know?), how to protect themselves (What can you do?) and how to stay safe (What should you not do?). The project expanded the population most at-risk to the dangers of lead exposure to include women of child bearing age and children younger than 6, including infants.

The primary takeaway for other communities looking to provide education about lead exposure: people are independent and resilient and they can learn and apply the self-help steps needed to avoid lead exposure.

>> DANGERS OF LEAD



There is no safe level of lead in the blood. Exposure to lead—even at low levels—can cause permanent health effects including:

- lower IQ
- hyperactivity
- speech and language delays
- behavior problems
- learning disabilities
- slowed growth

In extreme cases, lead exposure can also cause increase childhood health problems like kidney damage, seizures and death.



Over the course of the *Well Fed Means Less Lead* campaign, the canvassers, campaign leaders and Milwaukee Nutrition & Lead Task Force members noticed many themes—and corrected many myths—regarding Milwaukee’s lead crisis.

The education campaign and canvass supported real-time feedback from residents on message quality and myths that arose in the absence of effective communication and transparency. While the presence of lead may vary by location, known and shared best practices to keep families safe and educated about lead exposure are critical. These lessons should be included in any future lead awareness campaign.

MYTH:

I can boil the lead out of my water.

FACT:

Boiling the water does not filter out lead.



“We have a serious job. I’m constantly asking myself if I reached enough people today. I feel like this can mean life or death for a family and we can be the difference in keeping one kid safe from lead with every house we go to.”

-Amani canvasser

People are intelligent and resilient; of families who filtered their water,

57%

purchased their own water filter system.



I wish my mom had this information when I was a baby.
I got sick, but at least now I can save my kids.



MYTH:

It's too expensive to get a water filter.

FACT:

Buying a \$29 faucet filter is 28 times cheaper than buying bottled water, on average.



Using a water filter can be

28x cheaper
than buying bottled water.



More people need to actually talk to residents.
Writing a couple words on a billboard or sign doesn't help a lot.



Get all the information you need to protect your family from lead:
www.getwellfed.org

MYTH:

If I filter the lead out of my water, I don't need to worry about lead anymore.

FACT:

Lead is a potent toxin and can be found in paint, soil and environmental products as well as the water.

CONGRATULATIONS

In late 2018, the Dominican Center for Women and Hunger Task Force received the BizTimes Nonprofit Excellence Award for Nonprofit Collaboration of the Year as part of their partnership within the Amani neighborhood.



**MAKE NUTRITION & LEAD
TASK FORCE ! Well Fed
Means
Less Lead**

Visit [GetWellFed.org](https://www.getwellfed.org) for more information.